

HOOKEDNOW

DAVE SKIP RICK
HUGHES-MORRIS-HAFELE

THANK YOU FOR SUBSCRIBING TO *HOOKEDNOW* the online e-zine for fly fishers. Welcome to the October-November issue. As always our goal is to entertain and educate with a combination of text, photos, and video. Feel free to contact us if you have any questions or comments at: sweltsa@frontier.com (please include "HookedNow" in the subject line for quicker replies). We also hope you will tell your fishing buddies about HookedNow.

The Oct/Nov issue describes what to do when trout get that fussy "leave me alone" attitude during low water, late fall conditions. To make sure we cover the bases Skip discusses lakes, Dave freestone streams and Rick spring creeks and tailwaters.

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[CLICK HERE](#)

To watch video of Rick, Skip, and Dave discussing how to catch fussy trout!

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Photo by Rick Hafele



RICK HAFELE- FUSSY TROUT: SPRING CREEKS & TAILWATERS



It was one of the strangest sounds I had ever heard on stream. The spring creek I was standing in is well known to thousands, if not millions of fly fishers, but for some reason on this morning I was alone, just me and the rising trout. I'd been fishing for over an hour with nothing but refusals and increasing frustration to show for it. So I closed my eyes and took a deep breath. Like often happens when you close your eyes your sense of hearing seems to rise higher in your consciousness. At first I couldn't place the sound I heard, but then I realized it was dozens of trout mouths slapping shut on the tens of thousands of trico spinners drifting downstream like dandelion seeds caught in a breeze. The fact that I could actually hear the mouths of trout snapping up trico spinners impressed the hell out of me, but it didn't

do anything to make me feel better about getting blanked. Desperation I guess led me to try something unusual before the feeding frenzy ended, and to my surprise - and great relief - it worked. I'll describe my desperate solution in a bit. Oh, the spring creek in case you are wondering was Silver Creek in Idaho. If you want to fish for fussy trout Silver Creek won't disappoint you!

So, what exactly do we mean by "fussy" trout? I was thinking about that and decided I better look up the definition of fussy. My computer dictionary (hmm...can't seem to find the old Webster), says fussy means "hard to please" or "showing excessive concern about detail." With those definitions in mind I think "fussy" describes quite well trout that are difficult to catch. But trout aren't always fussy. So what are the conditions that create such hard to please attitudes? And do spring creeks and tailwaters create these attitudes more often than freestone streams or lakes?



*Millions of Trico spinners fill the air over a glassy smooth run. Conditions just right for selective trout.
Photo by Rick Hafele*



Spring creeks often produce some of the fussiest trout due to their clear water, gentle currents, and abundant food items.

Photo by Rick Hafele of the Upper Williamson River on the Yamsi Ranch fishing resort.

For trout to get fussy I think several factors have to occur. One, food needs to be plentiful, and for trout to get really fussy it needs to be just a single food item that dominates; a huge spinner fall of tricos for example. On streams without a rich food supply trout can't afford to be fussy. They must eat a wide variety of food to get enough in their bellies. Even on streams or lakes with large amounts of food, the supply of food isn't consistent. Thus trout aren't fussy all the time, just when certain food items peak in abundance. Second, trout will be harder to fool when the water they are feeding in allows them to see their food easily and doesn't force them to rush after it. The still surface of lakes or trout feeding in streams with slow, smooth currents will typically produce fussier trout than trout feeding in areas with fast, broken water. And last trout that are fished over more do learn to recognize our copies from the real thing and get more sensitive to leaders and drag and people on the bank with strange long rods in their hands. If you've ever fished a remote stream in Alaska or some other out of the way location, you know how differently fish respond than those in heavily fished waters. So, large food supply, clear quiet water, and fishing pressure all work together to create fussy trout.

Do these conditions occur more often on spring creeks and tailwaters than freestone streams and lakes? You bet they do. Silver Creek is a perfect example. Here's a spring creek with abundant insect life that routinely produces large concentrated hatches, it has clear water with glassy smooth currents, and it gets a ton of fishing pressure. Talk

about fussy trout, they are fussy with a capital “F” that often leads to mutterings that can’t be printed here.

When it comes to food supply, spring creeks and tailwaters have something in common that tends to produce large concentrations of single food items. This is their relatively constant water temperature. By their very nature water temperature in spring creeks varies little from morning to night or from season to season. In tailwaters, water temperature is driven by how water is released from the dam. In many such systems the water is bottom released, which means water temperature varies much less than it would under natural conditions. Such nearly constant water temperature has a significant effect on insect life. It turns out that many aquatic insects require seasonal changes in water temperature in order to complete their life cycle. For some the eggs need both low and high temperatures to complete development. For others the pupa or final nymph stage isn’t triggered to complete maturation until a certain temperature occurs. Thus in places like spring creeks or tailwaters, where temperature variation is small, some insect species can’t survive. But the species that do find cool constant temperature to their liking, generally thrive and occur in large numbers with less competition from other species.

Another factor that can increase insect abundance common to both spring creeks and tailwaters is their relatively constant stream flows. Floods and drought are natural occurrences in streams, and aquatic insects as well as trout are well adapted to survive them, but they still take a toll on the overall abundance of life in a stream. So in waters like spring creeks or tailwaters, where floods and drought rarely occur, insect abundance will typically be higher. Stable stream flows also promote the growth of aquatic plants, and aquatic plants harbor large numbers of aquatic insects.



Rich growths of aquatic plants occur more frequently in the near constant flows of spring creeks and tailwater streams. Such plant communities frequently harbor large numbers of aquatic insects and crustaceans. Photo by Rick Hafele

All these factors - constant water temperature, stable stream flows, and high density of aquatic plants - produce streams with a higher abundance but generally lower diversity of insect life. In turn this produces more frequent periods with high concentrations of single food forms, which leads to more frequent fussy trout feeding. Fly fishers love large hatches of insects that get trout feeding, and to some degree also love the challenge of fussy trout. So what can you do when trout turn fussy and your success is in the toilet?

First you need to know what the trout are eating. Remember fussy means, "showing excessive concern about detail ." So it's important to know not just which mayfly or caddisfly or other insect is present, but what stage of the insect trout are eating. For example if it's a mayfly that is emerging you need to get a close look at it so you know its size and color. But you also need to watch the feeding trout carefully to determine if they are feeding on the nymphs swimming up to the surface, the duns emerging in the film, the duns floating on the surface, or maybe spinners that have laid their eggs and died on the surface. Deciphering this puzzle will be critical to your success and it requires careful observation of the insects and the trout that are feeding on them.

One of the best tools I have found to help solve such puzzles is a pair of binoculars. By looking at the water's surface with binoculars you will often discover that in addition to the mayfly dun floating on the surface there is a midge adult as well, and that's what the trout are feeding on. Or when trout are rising but nothing can be seen on the surface, you may see that in fact there are hundreds of spent spinners floating by and trout are sipping them with little tiny rises. I can't tell you how many times a pair of binoculars has helped me solve fussy trout puzzles.

Once you know the insect and its stage the fish are taking you can select a good pattern. Pay close attention to size. Most anglers select a pattern larger than the natural,



During heavy mayfly hatches it can be difficult - but critical - to determine if trout are feeding on duns on the surface (left photo), emerging duns on the surface or in the film (middle photo), or spinners drifting lifeless flush on the surface (right photo).

Photos by Rick Hafele

partly because most natural adult insects look larger flying in the air than they really are, and because it's hard to believe trout would refuse a size 12 fly when the natural is a size 14. In reality when trout are fussy, they become very aware of the natural's size and a pattern just one size too large will often be refused even though everything else about it is a good match. If trout are taking a look at your fly but not accepting it, it is always a good idea to put on a smaller pattern. This holds just as true when trout are selectively feeding on nymphs. If trout are taking size 18 blue-winged olive nymphs, don't fish a size 16.

But when trout are fussy even the best pattern will fail if your presentation isn't right. When fishing dries this usually means presenting your fly without drag of any kind. To prevent drag you need to land your fly on the water with some slack in your line and leader, so don't worry about making the perfect cast where the fly lands on the water at the end of a perfectly straight leader. You actually want some slack in your cast. You can do this by stopping your rod tip somewhat higher up at the end of your forward cast causing your line to straighten in the air and then rebound back towards you slightly before falling to the water. You can also introduce more slack into your leader by increasing the length of your tippet. When faced with smooth surface currents and fussy trout, try a tippet at least four feet long.

Of course using a lighter tippet also helps. You can also improve your success



One of the best ways to find out if your pattern is close to the natural is to put the two side-by-side. The size 18 emerger pattern still looks big next to the natural blue-winged olive. Photo by Rick Hafele



Presentation! You won't catch many trout, especially those in a fussy mood, unless you present your fly naturally. A long supple tippet helps, and so does standing well back from the water as seen here. Photo by Rick Hafele

by using a down and across presentation instead of casting up and across. The down and across approach allows your fly to reach the trout before any part of the leader or line, which will often prove much more effective.

The right equipment will also improve your chances of success. In this case one of the main problems with fussy trout on any water but especially clear, calm spring creeks can be your leader. Even when your fly floats naturally without drag your leader can still tip off those highly educated trout that your fly is a fake. A down and across cast and finer tippet can help, but sometimes even that fails. If so try using fluorocarbon leader material for your tippet. Fluorocarbon is less visible and tends to sink below the surface, reducing its visibility even more. Even though it sinks, if just your tippet is made of fluorocarbon your dry flies should still be able to float. So if trout continue to refuse your fly, even though it's the right size and drifting without drag, give fluorocarbon tippet material a try.

Oh, now about that desperate solution on Silver Creek. Well I'd been trying every trico spinner pattern I had plus dropped down to 7x tippet, but all to no avail. So in desperation I tied on a small soft hackle that fit the size and color of the trico spinner. I presented it dead-drift, just like the spinner patterns, but let it sink just below the surface. This changed everything. Those fussy, frustrating, f..... trout finally became catchable. Perhaps the little soft hackle was just different enough from what these educated trout were use to seeing, or maybe the leader was less visible, or...? I'm not sure why it worked, but it did. Which brings me to the last thing to keep in mind when faced with really fussy trout: Don't be afraid to experiment. Try something different. Something the trout aren't use to seeing. When all else fails this can be your last chance at turning frustration into that day you'll never forget. But no matter what happens, a day of fishing over fussy trout almost always makes for a good fishing story later! Happy casts.



Photo by Rick Hafele

SUCCESS!

Here are some of my favorite fussy trout fly patterns



Biot CDC Dun: Note the loop knot - it can help eliminate drag.



CDC Parachute Emerger



CDC Emerger



Poly Wing Rusty Spinner



Trico Spinner Soft Hackle (*This is the fly that saved the day for me on Silver Creek*)

DAVE HUGHES – FUSSY TROUT ON FREESTONE STREAMS

Photo by Rick Hafele



Freestone waters have a different set of structures than spring creeks and tailwaters, lakes and ponds, subjects covered by a couple of other scoundrels in these e-pages. Freestoners are defined by their typical riffle-to-run-to-pool sequences, with some flats thrown in, though those are more common in streams with stable sources.

Trout get fussy in response to a certain set of circumstances, among them the availability of a specific food source, abundant above all others at that moment; intense pressure by lots of anglers over a sustained period of time; smoothness of the currents, allowing long periods for examination of naturals and their imitations; and a particular and undefined snottiness that makes some trout, at some times, desire one precise thing and refuse all else.

You can add these things together--stream structure and factors in trout selectivity--and quickly define the places where you're most likely to find fussy trout in freestone streams: on rare flats and smooth runs, at the heads and tailouts of pools, along soft sides of riffles and runs, and in eddies at the edges. Trout might be confronted with an abundance of a single food type, say a mayfly dun, emerging caddis, or egg-laying stonefly species, in the chop of a riffle or a rumpled run. They are even likely to become selective to whatever they're focused upon in that kind of water. But you can usually solve it in rough fashion, with a hackled Catskill dry, an Elk Hair Caddis style dry, or a foam stonefly dressing that floats like a cork. Imitation is less important than flotation in bouncy water. An approximation of the size, form, and color of the natural will usually be enough. The trout, in such a situation,

Photo by Rick Hafele



When fishing to rising trout in the heavy, choppy water typical of many freestone streams, a dry fly that floats well in rough water may be more important than close imitation.

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Photo by Dave Hughes



Skip lands a nice brown trout. This water may look choppy, but the calm slicks behind boulders are where the trout hangout and get fussy during a good hatch. Success requires close imitation with a fly that looks good up close.

might be defined as fussy, to a point, but it's a point that's not difficult to reach if you're careful to capture a natural and select a dressing that is at least somewhat imitative to it, and that floats well.

Solving fussy trout on the less-rough parts of freestone waters, however, requests that you observe the type of water in which the trout are working, determine the precise stage of the particular food form on which they're feeding, select a fly that matches it as closely as you can, then present that fly as a natural might arrive into the interested gaze of a feeding trout. Solve those simple things, in that order of importance, and you'll enter into intimate relationships with many more selective trout.

Observing the water type in which trout are feeding will inform you about the type of fly *style* you need to tie on. In the example of rough water already given, you'd do well to select a high-floating pattern that is perhaps less imitative. If you try to fish a precise imitation, with nothing to keep it up on the surface in choppy water, it will sink, and you'll be fishing a wet fly, at best, when your attempt is to fish a dry. At worst you'll reduce your chances to near zero by fishing a fly unsuited to the type of water over which you cast it. On the opposite hand, if you select a heavily-hackled dressing to fish over a hatch on the smoother parts of freestone streams, you're not likely to spend much time with your rod bent.

I visited Bob Borden once, in his offices at Hareline Dubbin' near Eugene, Oregon. I was on my way to float the Willamette River during its early-season March Brown mayfly hatch. Bob asked what I was planning to use, and I answered, "Your March Brown Parachute." It was true that he'd originated the pattern, and it was a polite answer. But it

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was also true that I'd fished the hatch for years with Bob's dressing and many others, and had arrived at his fly as the style that floated well on the gentle ripples where the naturals hatched, that lowered the body into the surface film in a good show of the insect, and perhaps most important, that from casting distance displayed the most realistic silhouette of the natural on the water. When cast out among a fleet of floating March Brown duns, Bob's parachute pattern stood on the water almost precisely like them. I can't tell you exactly why this appearance of the correct posture from a distance is so important to trout, but a perfect imitation held in your hand that floats on the water with a less than perfect profile from your view behind the rod will not fool as many fish.

On those broad and fairly smooth but freestone Willamette waters, a hackled dressing won't fool any trout at all. During my visit with Bob, some fellows with their roots firmly planted in fly fishing traditions also came by, on their way to fish the same hatch. Bob, as is his habit, asked them what they planned to use. They showed us their boxes, filled with the most beautiful, delicately-tied traditional dressings I'd ever seen. I nearly swooned, those flies were so prettily-tied. After they'd gone, Bob said, "They aren't going to catch many trout out there on flies with hackle collars."



Photo by Rick Hafele

A parachute dry fly does the trick on the quiet water below gentle ripples on the Willamette River .

I saw them later at the take-out ramp. Bob was right. They reported catching a couple of small trout each, had many more refusal rises, and landed little more than frustration. I'll decline to give numbers, but Bob's parachute, better suited to the gentle freestone waters we fished, brought a satisfying count of trout to my own hand.

Choose your fly style to suit the insect over which you're fishing, and factor in the roughness or smoothness of the water over which you'll fish it, before you ever tie it to your tippet.

A couple of things, including that tippet, should be examined before you make your first cast with whatever fly you choose to suit the situation, when trout are fussy. The first is your casting position. Freestone streams offer a confusion of water types, and you've got to solve each differently. Each prospective lie, each rising trout, each fussy fish, might require a different approach and presentation.

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For example, if you're fishing a riffle, then you might get away with a direct upstream cast and downstream float. Because the surface is broken, a trout is less likely to see, and be alarmed by, your line and leader flying over its head, landing on the water, then escorting the fly down toward it as if the fly were a poodle trotting on the end of a visible leash. Try that same trick--the upstream presentation--on trout on a smooth flat or edge current, however, and you'll send far more fish sailing than you will ever bring to hand. Just as you did with your fly pattern selection, select your casting position and presentation method based on the water type in which you find fussy trout.

If the water is a bit wrinkled, whether in a riffle or run, take your casting position at least slightly off to the side, rather than straight downstream from the trout. Then your cast carries at an angle to the fish, your line and leader sail through the air out of its sight, your fly lands and floats down the trout's feeding lane while the leader trails away, most often seen second, not first, by the trout. If a trout can be conned into focusing on the fly, rather than the frightening leader and line, you're far more likely to hook and land it.

If the water is more toward smooth, and you can manage it without risk of drowning, take a position almost directly off to one side or the other, and present your fly with a cross-stream reach cast. This involves aiming your fly just upstream from the trout, then tipping your rod over in the upstream direction while the loop unfurls and delivers your fly to the water. The result is an angle between your rod top and the trout's position.

Photo by Rick Hafele

You follow the drift of the fly with your rod, and that drift is extended by several feet. The fly floats freely toward the trout, with the leader and then line angled away from the trout, off to the side. The trout sees the fly first, and in all likelihood will never notice anything else. If your cast is accurate, and your drift drag-free, you'll usually rise the trout unless your fly is all wrong.



In freestone reaches where the water is smooth, and trout are perhaps more

Though surrounded by fast water, the trout in the smooth water behind this large boulder where as picky as trout get. Not only do you need the right fly, but you need to present it softly and get a drift without drag - use a reach cast - to be successful. Typical of fussy trout anywhere.

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Photo by Rick Hafele



Flats like this often means taking a position above trout and making a down and across slack line presentation.

heavily pestered than you'd like, then it might become necessary to take a position at an angle upstream from a specific rising and fussy trout, and present your fly to it with a downstream wiggle cast. This entails aiming the fly to land in the trout's feeding lane, from one to four or five feet upstream from it. While the line slides out through the guides, and the loop unfurls in the air, wobble your rod back and forth vigorously. The line

will land on the water like a snake out for a swim. As these line curves

straighten on the water, the fly gets a free drift downstream. The fly is the first thing, and the only thing, the trout is able to observe. The leader trails out directly behind the fly, out of the trout's sight.

Just this past season I fished Rock Creek, in Montana, with the same set of scoundrels who are covering various other aspects of fussy trout in this issue of HookedNow. That stream is the very definition of a freestoner. But it has its short and somewhat smooth flats between longer reaches of rough water. It was evening. A flight of ginger spinners was in the air. At least a few of them were getting onto the water. Trout rose here and there to nip at them. I chose a Pale Ginger Parachute, size 16, as the most likely dressing that would look enough like the naturals, but also float on the water over which it became necessary to cast it.



Rock Creek has the typical riffle-run-pool configuration common to many freestone streams. Photo by Dave Hughes

I waded in and began casting at an angle upstream to the rising trout. I was able to get a few refusal rises, which as you know are more frustrating than no attention at all. Rather than switching flies, which was my first inclination, I bulled upstream against the

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Photo by Rick Hafele



Wading into heavy water, then casting downstream into small pockets along the bank, fooled a good number of otherwise fussy trout.

current to get into a better position, and started fishing the same fly over the same trout with a cast that was a combination of a cross-stream reach with a downstream wiggle--you'll find that when you try to solve fussy trout on freestone streams more than half of the situations call for some creative casts, many of which have never been described. Name one for yourself, and you might become famous.

As soon as I began presenting that fly downstream to the trout, instead of upstream, the trout became foolish. There were few refusals. Until I lost the parachute on a slightly heavy hook set, and found that there was not enough light left to tie on a new one, I pestered as many trout as I could so that they'd later be more difficult for you to catch.

A fly pattern with the right posture on the water, the best position you can take for the water in which you're fishing, and the correct presentation for the degree of smoothness of the water over which you're casting, are all critical parts of solving fussy trout on freestone streams. I'll leave you with one last piece to the puzzle, to be solved before you ever embark on that set of frantic fly changes that follow every set of refusals by fussy trout. The first time you find yourself refused rather than accepted, look at your tippet. If it's shorter than two feet, cut it back to a foot, and add three feet of tippet one size finer.

This might make the tippet undersized, a bit fine for the size fly you're casting, according to all the traditional formulas. You'll sacrifice a bit in terms of turnover and perhaps accuracy of presentation. But you'll gain a tremendous advantage in drag-free drift of the fly.

That drag-free drift, a result of choosing the right fly style, best position, correct presentation, and a suitable tippet, can be more important than the precise right pattern in solving fussy trout on freestone streams.

Photo by Dave Hughes



Dry Flies for different water types (from left to right):

CDC Biot Dun, Parachute Dun, Thorax Dun, Harrop Dun, Compara Dun, and Catskill Dun.
Choosing the pattern style wisely, based on the water type being fished, can greatly increase your success.

SKIP MORRIS - ATTITUDE ON TROUT LAKES



Photo by Rick Hafele

For about a year and a half I fished often on a private lake (managed by the Oregon Fishing Club)--a bit too often, judging by the behavior of the trout. They got smart.

When I first fished the lake it was early spring and the trout were hungry and easy. Nobody had bothered them much. But from then on, I did. I started hooking and releasing them three or four days a week. About any kind of nymph worked, and if the fish were rising, about any kind of reasonable dry fly worked too.

By early summer the trout were catching on. By midsummer the lake was too warm for much fishing except at sunset, so I gave them something of a break. With the first cool week of fall, the break ended. The trout were easier for a while, but soon they remembered the lessons I'd taught them. So I continued their training and they ended up, as I mentioned, smart.

I'd run into wary trout in lakes before, but this was a shot at my masters degree in the discipline--experienced trout, constantly on their guard, and the opportunity to face them daily for hours. I had to make a living of course, but I worked around that.

CONSIDER CHIRONOMIDS

The first thing I learned on that squareish little lake--a pond, really, on the edge of a farmer's field--is that a chironomid-pupa fly worked below a strike indicator is very effective on fussy trout. Those rainbows never really did figure that one out. It's a truly standard technique these days for lakes--you anchor your boat or inflatable craft, set the strike indicator up a long leader and long tippet a distance from the weighted fly about a foot short of the depth, cast the rig well out and across the wind, do nothing but watch the indicator until it's straight downwind, and then begin the deathly slow retrieve of little tugs on the indicator separated by long pauses.

The technique often works even when there's no chironomid hatch. I guess trout are so used to eating the pupae and the technique is so convincing that it's always a good bet.



Photo by Rick Hafele



Photo by Carol Morris

There are literally hundreds of different species of chironomids in lakes, so finding a pupa pattern the right size and color can be tricky. You can determine the size by locating some empty pupa shucks (on right). To get a close idea of color, however, you'll need to find some pupa before they actually emerge.

NAIL THE SIZE AND ACTION

When there is a hatch, trout in lakes can turn tough in a different way--then it's not moodiness or, really, even wariness so much as selectivity. "Selective" trout have locked onto one particular insect and that's all they're about to eat. They can be very good at this. Example. I and my wife Carol and a friend were fishing on Georgetown Lake in Montana during a hatch of small chironomids. I caught up a sample and found it was light-olive. Okay. We each rigged up with a size-14 olive Gummy Worm (my standard chironomid-pupa imitation). Half an hour later we'd seen our indicators twitch a few times but had felt only one fish on the hook-set. The following half hour was another matter entirely.

I scooped up another hatcher and compared it with my fly. The fly was one size too large. So I switched to a size 16, hooked two fish in short order, and then switched us all to size 16s. We hooked fish steadily throughout the duration of the hatch (it lasted about three more hours), lots of fish, sometimes double and triple hook-ups. Okay, this is an exceptionally clean example--a change of but one hook size, the action surging from cool to red-hot. But it happened, and such things do happen.

So, when there's a hatch, when the trout have decided what they want--give it to them, and make sure it's the right color and at the right depth and...the right size.

Along with getting the fly's color and depth right, you'll need to make the fly behave just as the insect does. If caddisflies are hatching, watch one. Does it struggle long to escape its shuck? If so, fish an emerger-fly and make it quiver as the natural does. Maybe your caddis emerges in a blink, and then scrambles across the water before flying off--watch it closely, and then twitch and skid a dry fly to suggest its running. And if it

pauses now and then, make your fly do the same. Observation is something of an art, and one critical to the fly fisher.

LESSONS FROM RIVERS

Many of the same tactics that work on selective river trout work on trout in lakes. Consider water clarity. On a river, that suggests fine tippets; it's the same in lakes. If the trout are saying no, try going down a tippet size, say from 3X to 4X, or even 5X. I've actually gone down to 8X to take rising brown trout on a perfectly clear pond in the Colorado Rockies, and am still convinced such fine filament was necessary.

Photo by Dave Hughes



When there's no wind and the lake's surface is completely flat, your leader becomes even more obvious to the trout. Such conditions often mean you need to put on a finer tippet.

SMALLER CAN BE BETTER

A smaller fly, like a finer tippet, can make the difference, as with those contrary trout on Georgetown Lake I mentioned. During a hatch, it may be about using a smaller fly or a larger fly--whichever matches the natural--but sometimes a small fly is simply more convincing to trout than a large one. It's something of an axiom among fly fishers who regularly face difficult trout in rivers, and it applies to lakes sometimes too. So maybe you're tossing a size-8 Tom Thumb into the chilly and oxygen-rich shallows of your favorite lake in fall and a two-pound brown moves to it, and then turns away. A classic refusal--the fish was interested, but not quite convinced. Especially if that happens again with the next fish, try a Tom Thumb in size 10, and then in size 12. I'll bet things change.

Back to hatches again, this time it's the *Callibaetis* mayfly, the most common mayfly of trout lakes. Those rising fish seem to be ignoring your size-12 emerger that's a proven imitation of *Callibaetis*, so try the same fly pattern size-14, then 16. That's the full size range of this mayfly in my experience. If that works, it's probably about matching the size of the natural. But even if your original size-12 is unquestionably the exact size of the real mayflies, a size 14 may work better. No one can really say why, but it sometimes works that way.



Callibaetis Dun

SLOWER CAN BE BETTER

So, small can be best, and so can slow. Many fly fishers work their flies too quickly in lakes. They tug in an imitation scud at a quick clip--far from the plodding pace of a real scud. Few of the things trout eat in lakes--with such rare exceptions as tiny fishes and startled dragonfly nymphs--moves very fast. That's one reason I always recommend that new lake fishers learn the hand-twist retrieve; it slows their retrieves way down. Even in experienced hands this retrieve won't scoot a fly along, but with a beginner...just right. Of course the other reason I recommend the hand-twist retrieve is that it provides the angler constant control of the line. Somehow, trout in lakes seem to know exactly when the angler using the common strip retrieve is reaching up for another section of line, the weak point in the process.

CRAZY

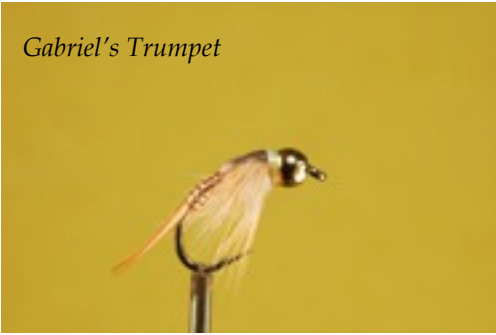
The subject of slow retrieves--which really can move sullen trout in lakes when modest-tempo ones can't--brings us to the ace-up-my-sleeve, the tactic I save for after all the sensible things I can think of fail: I start trying crazy stuff. I mean, how can you discuss slow retrieves without considering fast ones? And fast retrieves on sullen trout is crazy. But again, crazy can work.

So for one, when slow and deathly slow retrieves don't work, pick them up and keep speeding them up until they are unnaturally quick. See what happens...

HUGHES-MORRIS-HAFELE

Photo by Carol Morris

Gabriel's Trumpet



There's more to crazy on trout lakes than just fast retrieves. Take flies. Imitations of scuds and leeches and dragonflies and chironomids make perfect sense, but a stunningly gold nymph does not. However, my friend Peter Morrison, who lives near some rich lakes up in British Columbia he absolutely pounds every spring and summer with formidable skill, relies on my metallic-bright Gabriel's Trumpet nymph when nothing else seems to move a fish. He

wrote me a few years ago about this phenomenon, and wrote me again a week ago. He said that when his favorite and most reliable chironomid patterns stopped drawing strikes on a local lake he tried the Trumpet and, suddenly, the fishing turned hot. He fished the fly deep below a strike indicator, chironomid style. In the e-mail he says, "...although many people probably don't fish it [the dazzling-bright Gabriel's Trumpet] in stillwaters I certainly recommend it, because I know it works when everything else fails."

But there are other unnatural flies that can move moody trout in lakes. Once in a while, on some hard-fished lakes I've seen some indifferent trout turn wild when I dangled a big fluffy bright-orange or -pink Glo-Bug in front of them. Perhaps only one out of five took the fly, but with a string of them swinging by, that made for a spate of fast action. A huge bright egg-fly is certainly unnatural in a lake, since trout spawn not in standing water but in streams...and their eggs are hardly huge. But an attractor, from a big Chernobyl Ant to a massive hair mouse might stir sullen trout in lakes. And then there's that European Boobie Fly--a buoyant aberration (originally with two white orbs up front that now are usually replaced with a section of foam dowel) that is tugged along the bottom of a lake above a sinking line--I've seen the fly work when nothing else did a thing. We're kidding ourselves when we think we truly understand trout. We know a lot...but only so much.

So when lakes go quiet, there are still some angles you can try and these are the primary ones I rely on. Sometimes they can work wonders.

Photo by Carol Morris



Gummy Worm Skip Morris

Hook: Heavy wire, standard length to 1X long, straight shank or curved, sizes 14 to 10.

Bead (optional): Black metal.

Thread: Eight-ought in a color similar to the color of the Flashabou.

Gills: White Antron yarn, bound with the fibers projecting off the hook's eye. After binding, whip finish the thread and cut it, and then slide the bead forward to the hook's eye. Restart the thread behind the bead over the whip finish.

Rib: Medium-small copper wire, natural copper color or whatever color suits your taste.

Body: Flashabou or Krystal Flash in any chironomid color--black, brown, green, red, tan, orange...--overwrapped with 1/8-inch clear Stretch Flex or Scud Back. After binding the wire back, cut the tip of the Stretch Flex to a point, bind the point projecting back over the bend (as the rear gills) with a narrow band of thread. Pull the bulk of the Stretch Flex back and bind on the Flashabou right in front of the thread-band. Wind the Flashabou to the bead and bind it; wind the Stretch Flex up to the bead and bind it; wind, bind, and trim the rib.



Photo by Carol Morris

Tom Thumb

Hook: Light to standard wire, 1X or 2X long, straight or slow-curve shank, sizes 14 to 8.

Thread: Black 3/0, 6/0, or 8/0.

Tail: Elk hair.

Hump and Wing: Elk hair, one stretch of hair for both. The hair tips should form a fan that angles slightly forward.

the dowel crossways, and then trim its ends.



Photo by Carol Morris

Boobie Fly

Hook: Heavy wire, short to long shank, generally, large.

Thread: Three-ought in the body's color.

Tail: One full marabou plume (two plumes on the largest hooks).

Eyes: A foam dowel in about any color, but the original eyes were white. Bind the dowel crossways, and then trim its ends.

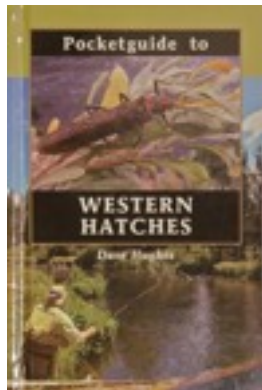
Body: Chenille. Also wind the chenille around the base of the eyes.

Comments: About anything goes with Boobie Flies, especially nowadays--standard chenille or plastic chenille, any length and color for the tail, body and eyes. They all seem to work.



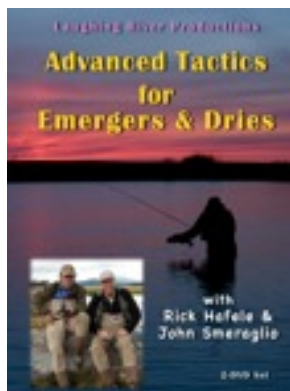
Photo by Carol Morris

Hot off the press from Dave, Rick, & Skip!



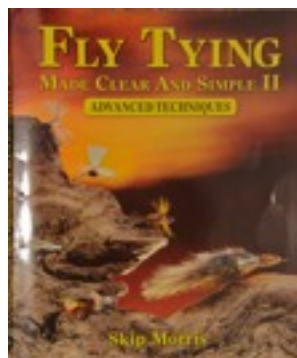
Dave's newest book, *Pocketguide to Western Hatches*, just out September 2011, is now available. It's inexpensive--\$21.95--presence in your vest pocket will help you choose the right fly style, practical pattern, best position, and proper presentation for any hatch, terrestrial, crustacean, or leech that you encounter on any western stream or stillwater.

Stackpole Books, 2011



Rick's newest instructional DVD (2-disc set) with John Smeraglio titled, *Advanced Tactics for Emergers & Dries*, is now available. Order it online at www.laughingrivers.com now. Available in your local fly shops soon.

\$29.95 - Laughing River Productions, 2011



Skip's latest book, *Fly Tying Made Clear and Simple II, Advanced Techniques*, offers thorough instructions for tying many great patterns for fussy trout. Frank Amato Pub, 2009

To learn more about Dave, Skip, and Rick's latest publications, where they are speaking, or to book them for your own program, go to their personal websites at:

Skip Morris: <http://www.skip-morris-fly-tying.com/>
Rick Hafele: <http://www.rickhafele.com/RH/Home.html>
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